

Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1173
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/11832/21

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN
Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

25 March 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 22 October outlining the concern of the Petitions Committee with the current influence of Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) and their request to explore a way of strengthening them. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I have considered the Committee's request and I wish to offer the following observations. The SLA policy framework (as detailed in my response to the Committee dated 16 September) is a sound and mature policy mechanism. It is based on robust evidence and it offers a valuable layer of additional protection for our sensitive landscapes. Indeed, this 'additionality' is a key feature of the policy; it is an 'over and above' policy response, available to local planning authorities where there is good reason to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection (see paragraph 6.3.13 of Planning Policy Wales).

I recognise that there are small number of planning authorities that do not have SLA policies in place. Often this is because the landscape quality across an authority is of such a high standard that adoption of a SLA policy would mean that the whole authority area is designated and thereby counteracting against the special landscape features, characteristics and qualities of local significance. These authorities usually opt to pursue a criterion-based policy approach to local landscape protection.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Julie.James@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.James@gov.Wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Taken as a whole I am confident that the strength of protection for valued local landscapes is available to local planning authorities.

The current influence of SLA policy is appropriate and it is meeting its policy objectives, I do not consider that there is a need, at this point, to strengthen the policy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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